

Remarks

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-54 are now pending in the application, with Claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 33, 41-44 and 54 being independent. Claims 1-12, 14-40 and 42-53 have been amended merely to improve their form and Claim 54 has been added herein. The claim changes have not been made for any reasons related to patentability.

Claims 1-4, 9-12, 17-20, 25-28, 33-36 and 41-53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,785,013 (Ota et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,389,248 (Konno et al.). Claims 5, 7, 13, 15, 21, 23, 29, 31, 37 and 39 were rejected under § 103 in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,676,309 (Shima).

Without conceding the propriety of these rejections, and solely to expedite allowance, Applicants are submitting herewith a sworn translation of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-221238, which was filed in Japan on July 21, 2000, and is the earliest of the three priority documents on which this application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119. Accordingly, this establishes a filing data, for the subject matter supported by that priority application, of July 21, 2000, which is earlier than the filing date of Konno et al. (August 28, 2000) and Shima (December 28, 2000). At least the pending independent claims are supported by the sworn translation. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejections are requested.

As to newly-presented independent Claim 54, this claim is based on independent Claim 1, but does not recite elements in means-plus-function format. Claim 54 should be allowable for similar reasons as Claim 1.

Thus, independent Claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 33, 41-44 and 54 are patentable over the citations of record. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejections are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is patentably defined by independent Claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 33, 41-44 and 54. Dependent Claims 2-8, 10-16, 18-24, 26-32, 34-40 and 45-53 are also allowable, in their own right, for defining features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowability are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Williamson", written over a horizontal line.

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